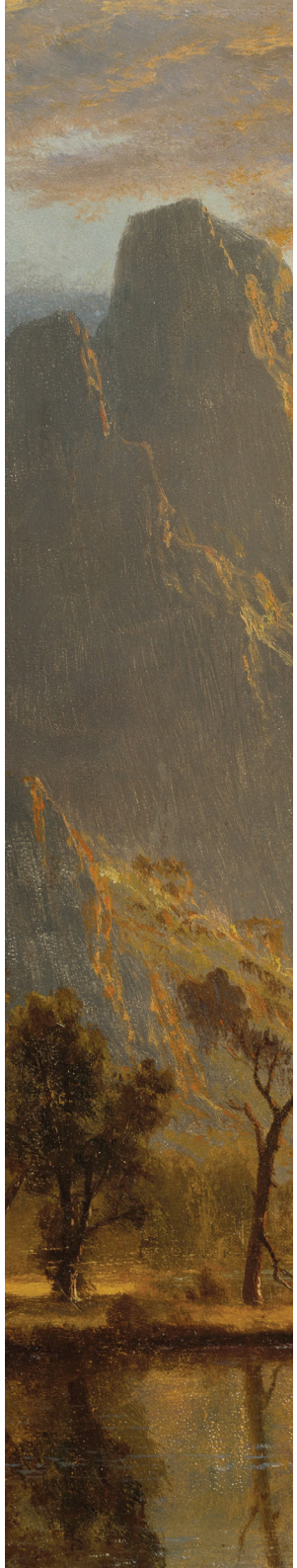
AMERICAN ROMANTICS III

Premiere Recordings of Turn of the Century Symphonic Works

LANSDOWNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
& REUBEN BLUNDELL, CONDUCTOR

These world-premiere recordings are the third in a series promoting music by American composers, from a rich but neglected body of music of the late 19th and 20th century. Some of these composers were born in America. Others, from Canada, Denmark, and Switzerland, joined and influenced the musical life of their adopted country. These orchestral works offer tantalizing glimpses of composers whose catalogues of compositions await further exploration.



DAVID STANLEY SMITH (1877-1949)

Prince Hal, An Overture, Op. 31 (1915)

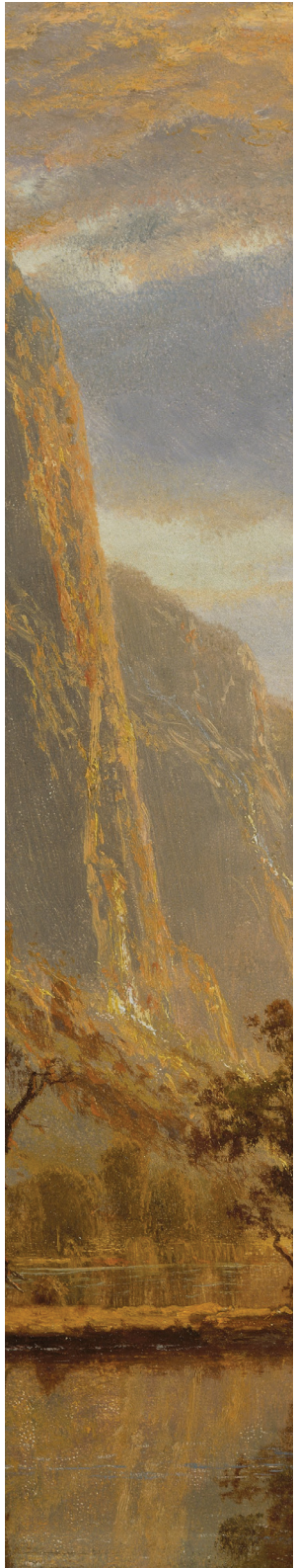
Prince Hal, from Shakespeare's *Henry* histories, is at first an undisciplined heir in troubling times for England, and his friendship with the bawdy Sir Falstaff has the court worried. Growing to maturity, Prince Hal rejects Falstaff, before assuming the throne as King Henry V. His place in history, in part, comes from his 1415 St. Crispin's Day speech as portrayed by Shakespeare, in which he inspired outnumbered English forces to defeat the French at the battle of Agincourt: "...we shall be remember'd; we few, we happy few, we band of brothers..."

The overture's energetic opening suggests Hal's rambunctiousness; the second theme, with woodwinds over a restless syncopated string harmony, is more introspective. Smith was a strong believer in developing and revising compositions, evinced in this piece. As an example, he once wrote that his eighth string quartet "was the result of overhauling my second quartet in A to the extent that I found myself with a brand-new work on my hands."

Despite his intense attachment to proper form and exhaustive revision, Smith composed over 38 orchestral works, with 12 of them accompanying solo instruments or voices, and a large body of chamber music, works for choral works, and songs.

Born in Toledo, Ohio, Smith moved to New Haven, Connecticut to attend Yale, inspired by the performance of a choral work by Horatio Parker at Cincinnati's May Festival. Parker, then founding Dean of Yale's School of Music, became his mentor. With the exception of a few lessons with composer and organist Charles-Marie Widor in Paris, Smith's entire formal musical education was at Yale. His career, too, was largely tied up with the school - shortly after playing the inaugural performance of the Newberry Organ at Woolsey Hall, he was hired to teach harmony, and he composed this overture while still a junior faculty member there. Smith would be elected by his colleagues to succeed Parker in 1920. Outside his faculty and administrative work, he was music director and conductor of the New Haven Symphony for twenty years.

Smith had a relationship with Connecticut before coming to Yale: his mother was a



member of one of the state's most storied families, the Griswolds. (For example, in the War of 1812, the Griswold Inn in Essex provided beverages to marauding British soldiers, who burned the shipyard, but then conveniently forgot their orders to raze the town.)

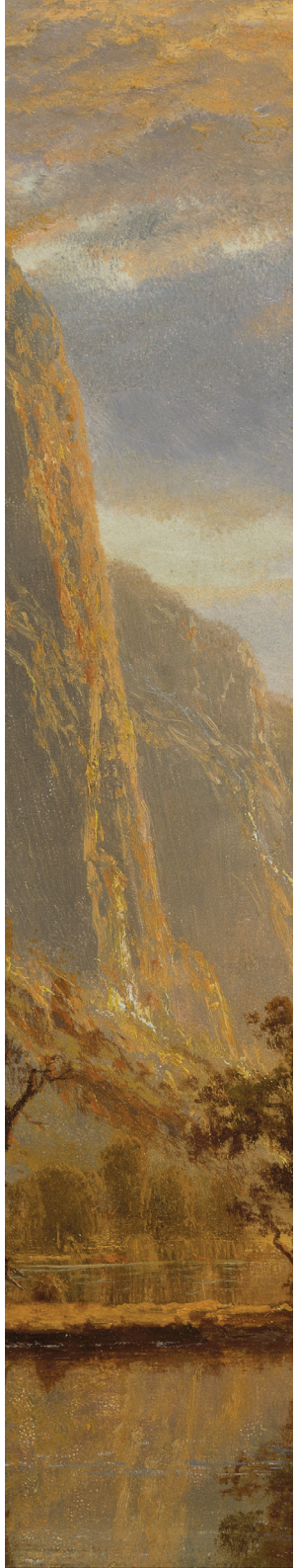
CARL BUSCH (1864-1943)

Minnehaha's Vision
The Song of Chibiabos

Carl Busch attended the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen, taught by two of its founders, Nils Gade and Johan Hartmann. It is likely he knew Carl Nielsen (1865-1931). After additional studies in Brussels and Paris, Busch moved to the United States in 1887, settling in Kansas City, already home to 2,000 Danish expatriates. Busch conducted various orchestras there, including the first Kansas City Symphony, from 1911-18. His longest appointment was at the University of Kansas City, but he also taught at the University of Chicago, at Notre Dame, and Interlochen: his students include Robert Russell Bennett (of famed Broadway arrangements) and the significant African-American composer William Dawson (1899-1990), later of the Tuskagee Institute. As well as guest conducting across the USA and in Europe, Busch composed works for orchestra (suites, rhapsodies, symphonic poems), woodwind ensembles, and bands.

For many works, Busch took melodic inspiration from Native American themes, such as in these tone poems, ***Minnehaha's Vision*** (1914) and The Song of ***Chibiabos*** (1916). Their genesis was the epic poem ***The Song of Hiawatha*** by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-82), itself inspired by Native American legends. The idea of such a literary basis for a single-movement orchestral work had found favor with many romantic composers, originating from Liszt but used by Tchaikovsky among many others.

Minnehaha's Vision opens with an idyllic, yearning passage (its lightness reminiscent of Wagner's ***Siegfried Idyll***, but with more plaintive, falling half-steps, and an "Indian Drum," actually a bass drum played with a hard beater). Busch evokes the passion of young Minnehaha as she waits for Hiawatha with expectation (ostinato



syncopated string writing over a gently dissonant bass line).

She was thinking of a hunter,
From another tribe and country,
Young and tall and very handsome,
Who one morning, in the Spring-time,
Came to buy her father's arrows,
Sat and rested in the wigwam,
Lingered long about the doorway,
Looking back as he departed.
She had heard her father praise him,
Praise his courage and his wisdom,
Would he come again for arrows
To the Falls of Minnehaha?

Musically passionate writing, and a noble *Maestoso* section, are followed by a climax, before the piece gives way to a soft and pastoral F major. Later in the chapter, Hiawatha does indeed return, with great news about peace between tribes - he asks for Minnehaha's hand, and she accepts. At the wedding, Hiawatha's friend Chibiabos is a guest, singing several songs for the wedding party.

Chibiabos is the subject of this second tone poem, and is a character who appears several times in Longfellow's poem. He's one of the warrior and leader Hiawatha's dearest friends, and a musician. All would listen to his music; and even nature (the brook, the bluebird, robin and whippoorwill) ask for his instruction. Longfellow describes him as "*gentle Chibiabos… the best of all musicians…the sweetest of all singers.*"

Unluckily for Chibiabos, he is also beloved by malevolent spirits, who steal him from the living by melting river ice while he's crossing: he is drowned. Entreaties from Hiawatha and the peoples of several tribes are denied, but Chibiabos is made chief of the underworld. At the very end of the Longfellow's poem, Hiawatha departs his people for the land of the hereafter - one imagines Chibiabos, his old friend, will be there to greet him.

GENA BRANSCOMBE (1881-1977)

A Memory

The prolific Canadian-American composer, Gena Branscombe, was born in the small Prince Edward Island town of Picton, across Lake Ontario from Rochester, NY. Showing exceptional musical ability as a child, she completed high school early to study piano in Chicago. Whitman College invited her to found their Music Department, so she left Chicago to spend two years in Walla Walla, Washington State. Marrying a lawyer (who supported her career to an exceptional degree for the time), the young couple spent a year in Berlin, where she studied with Engelbert Humperdinck (composer of ***Hansel & Gretel***), before settling in New York City. Her husband practiced law, and she composed, while founding and conducting a women's choir, and they raised a family of four daughters.

Branscombe composed operas, major works for orchestra, and well over a hundred and fifty songs. She also promoted compositions by women through several organizations. The Branscombe Chorale, which she founded, commissioned works from female composers, and for another project, she prepared "over 30 programs of works by American women composers for distribution to conductors throughout the nation."

A Memory is from 1911, and was originally published by the important Boston publishing house, Schmidt. A salon piece for violin, it was dedicated to powerhouse American violin virtuoso Maud Powell (1867-1920). In 1922, the Philadelphia composer William Happich, a fixture in Philadelphia's musical life, arranged it for strings and harp as a gift to Edwin Fleisher (1877-1959), founder of the Symphony Club. Fleisher willed his orchestral music collection to the Free Library of Philadelphia.

EDWARD MACDOWELL (1860-1908)

At an Old Trysting Place, from ***Woodland Sketches***, arr. Edmund Tiersch

Born in 1860 in New York, Edward MacDowell studied in Europe from the age of 16, first traveling with his mother to Paris, then continuing studies in Stuttgart, Wiesbaden, Frankfurt, and teaching briefly in Darmstadt. He met another young

New Yorker in Frankfurt, the pianist Marian Nevins, who had come to Germany hoping to study with Clara Schumann. Nevins and MacDowell married, and in 1886 the couple returned to America. First, they settled in Boston, where his compositions began to be widely celebrated nationally, moving then New York, where he led the fledgling Music Department of Columbia University.

MacDowell's romanticism is subtle. Many of his pieces bear titles of specific things and places, but he said that rather than literally depicting them, he intended his music to express his mood when contemplating them. This miniature, *At an old Trysting-place*, is marked "Somewhat quaintly, not too sentimentally," and it's reminiscent of those American paintings of a deserted and quiet scene: in this case, a secluded place (naturally!). There are recordings of the piano version, and this 1896 string transcription, by German émigré Edmond Tiersch, was recorded but not released, by the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1940.

Sadly, MacDowell succumbed to a form of stress or early onset dementia in his forties. Marian lived to 98, turning their summer home in New Hampshire into the MacDowell Artist's Colony and providing a haven for artists of many disciplines to work. The many residencies since then have included composers Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein and Virgil Thompson, and writers Thornton Wilder, James Baldwin, Alice Walker and Michael Chabon.

CHARLES WAKEFIELD CADMAN (1881-1946)

Thunderbird Suite (1918)

1. *Before the Sunrise*
2. *Nuwana's Love Song*
3. *Wolf Dance*
4. *Night Song*
5. *The Passing of Nuwana*

Born 1881 in Johnstown, PA (near Pittsburgh), Charles Wakefield Cadman was a prolific composer of orchestral suites, chamber music for duo, trio and quintet, solo piano works, five operas, some film music, and over 250 songs. Spending most of his career in California, he was instrumental in founding the Hollywood Bowl

summer series, performing regularly with the orchestra as a piano soloist.
In Cadman's early twenties, he became interested in Native American culture and music, spending time on reservations with Nebraska's Omaha tribe, and recording music using wax cylinders (as Bartók was doing in Hungary). At the same time, a future collaborator, Norman Bel Geddes, was drawn to Native American tribes in Oklahoma. (Bel Geddes is an interesting character - an American modernist, he designed theater and opera sets, cars, the 1939 World's Fair General Motors pavilion with its automated highway, and at one point, a nine-story airplane designed to fly. The New York Times called him "The Leonardo da Vinci of the 20th Century.") In 1918 Norman Bel Geddes and his wife, Helen, wrote a play, ***Thunderbird***, based on Native American themes and mythology, for performance in Los Angeles, collaborating closely with Cadman, who used authentic Blackfeet Indian melodies in what would become the suite's central three movements. For ***The Passing of Nuwana,*** Cadman wrote that he "employed an Omaha tribal theme relating to the 'Thunderbird idea' ... a mythological bird regarded by many North American Indian tribes as a symbol for storms and war. This idea and its relation to an Indian story really form the theatrical foundation for Mr. Norman Bel Geddes' drama." The play never ran, but Cadman extracted his orchestra suite in 1918, producing a piano version as well.

CECIL BURLEIGH (1885-1980)

At Sunset, from ***Rocky Mountain Sketches*** (1913)
Burleigh was born in Wyoming, NY, about 40 miles from Rochester and west of the Finger Lakes. He left age 17, pursuing violin and composition in Berlin (Germany), then Chicago. In New York, he studied with the venerable Leopold Auer (dedicatee of Tchaikovsky's violin concerto and teacher to Mischa Elman, Jascha Heifetz, and Nathan Milstein), before Auer left for Philadelphia to join the Curtis Institute of Music faculty.
Early in his career, Burleigh toured as a violin soloist. However, after his appointment teaching violin and composition at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, his travels slowed. One of his suites for violin and piano, ***Rocky Mountain Sketches***, was

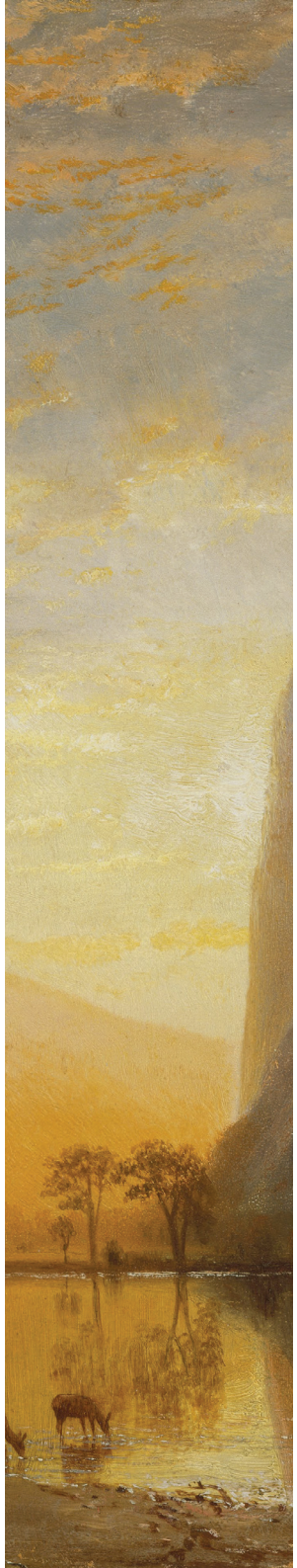
dedicated to violinist Maud Powell. This arrangement of the violin and piano piece was produced in 1921 by William Happich as a gift for Edwin Fleisher.

LUDWIG BONVIN (1850-1939)

Festzug (Festival Procession)

The Swiss-born American composer Ludwig Bonvin's route to Buffalo, NY, and to composition, was quite circuitous. Initially following in his father's footsteps, he studied medicine in Vienna, but then returned to Switzerland, to pursue law instead. Next, in a midlife change of direction, he was ordained a Jesuit priest in England aged 35, and assigned to Canesius College in Buffalo, NY, where he would spend 52 years on the faculty. Despite being largely self-taught in music, he conducted the College's choir, founded their orchestra, and was an active musical scholar and composer, with many organ, choral, and orchestral pieces to his name. Although he had some performances in the United States, including the Buffalo Philharmonic's premiere of his first symphony, his works gained more praise in Europe. ***Festival Procession*** was published by Germany's Breitkopf & Härtel, and performed in Britain's Promenade Concerts (the Proms) in 1901. Bonvin's music has a late-nineteenth century and Germanic sensibility, and is influenced by Wagnerian harmonies.

These pieces were provided by the **Edwin A. Fleisher Collection of Orchestral Music** at the Free Library of Philadelphia. The Fleisher Collection is the world's largest lending library of orchestral performance material, lending to performing organizations worldwide. Alongside virtually the entire standard repertoire, it houses many rare and out-of-print works, with a current collection of over 22,000 titles and growing. Many thanks to the Collection's curator, Dr. Gary Galván, librarian Stu Serio, and other staff members.



REUBEN BLUNDELL is currently in his fourth season as Music Director of the Lansdowne Symphony Orchestra. Alongside the musicians and board, he has overseen an expansion of the orchestra's repertoire to include many more 20th and 21st century composers, including contemporary works by John Adams, Jennifer Higdon and Mason Bates. Collaborating with the community, the orchestra has performed children's concerts at the Lansdowne Theater, and with the Lansdowne Friends School, receiving the Borough of Lansdowne's inaugural Sycamore Award for community engagement.

Additionally, Reuben is music director of the Riverside Orchestra in New York, and performs regularly with the Chelsea Symphony as both a violinist and conductor. He is in demand as a performer and educator, having taught for the US State Department and nonprofit American Voices in Lebanon and Iraq, also building an orchestra at Hunter College (CUNY) while an Assistant Professor there. He studied violin in Melbourne and Sydney, and through fellowships with the Tanglewood Music Center and New World Symphony. Following summers at the Pierre Monteux School for Conductors and Orchestra Musicians, he earned a doctorate in conducting at the Eastman School of Music with Neil Varon. Currently, he is a faculty member at New York's Trinity School and the Bloomingdale School of Music.

He lives with his wife, oboist Karen Birch Blundell, daughter Elizabeth, and their cat, Gracy, in Manhattan, near the Cloisters.

photo: Masataka Suemitsu

LANSDOWNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN 1
Herold Klein*
Concertmaster
Joy Baxter
Associate Principal
Diane Coffin
Mark Frankel
Laura Hammons
Betsy Klinger
Darrin McBride
Marcie Perziono
Liza de Prophetis
Eiko Ogiso Reimgewirtz
Daniel Ruehr
Amy Van Rossum
Benjamin Scott
Alex Wade

VIOLIN 2
Mira Olsen*
Lois Bordo Rosenberg*
Tamsin Fast
Ruth Beale
Katrina Christoforidis
Deanna George
Dorothea DiGiovanni
Annmarie Marchesani
Rebecca Mills
Allen Prebus
Elizabeth Reese
Lauren Scott
David Shapiro
Ian Spalding
Mariga Temple-West
Phil Watts

VIOLA
William Lai*
Arthur Gutzler
Kim Krelove
Kevin Lawrence
Stephanie McGrory
Suzanne Stevens
Sarah Sulon
Cari Sundermeier

CELLO
Ashley Border*
Kerry Sherin-Porter*
Diane Gerlach
Paul Leufkens
Mara Parker
James A. Schmid
Wendy L. Schmid
Beily Street
David Webber
Laurie Wolfe

BASS
Fay Kahmer*
Barbara Brophy
George Kahmer
Kurt Kuechler
Larry Jones, Jr.
Michael Carsley
Julius Shaneson

FLUTE & PICCOLO
Leslie Clifton*
Denise Corrigan
Robert Cart
Jennifer Flam

OBOE
Dawn Evans*
Harold Goldner
Cyndi Rekos

ENGLISH HORN
Harold Goldner

CLARINET
Robert Stanley*
Pamela Rootenberg

BASS CLARINET
Ingrid Zepp
Jeannine Webber

BASSOON
Lorraine Jewett*
Hiroshi Nakagawa

CONTRABASSOON
Kat Swift

HORN
Deann Giles*
Al Blatter
Rachel Braddick
BJ Brunner
Phillip Runkel
Joy Wierzbowski

TRUMPET
Robert High*
Rick Yiengst
Doug Wilfert

TROMBONE
Michael Armstrong
Jeremy Cohen*
Jon Hess
Griff Miller*

BASS TROMBONE
Ernest Lightfoot

TUBA
Scott Force

TIMPANI
Michael Carrier*
Enid Horowitz
Woody Zenfell III

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Jim Bellizzi
David Jamison
Nakiya Robley
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*denotes section principal

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THE LANSDOWNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA was founded in 1946 to provide music for the First Presbyterian Church of Lansdowne. By 1951 the orchestra had become Lansdowne's community orchestra. The conductor and publisher Henri Elkan led the orchestra from 1955 until his passing in 1980. He initiated collaborations between the orchestra and area dance and choral ensembles and incorporated children's concerts into the annual concert series. Elkan also featured prominent area musicians as soloists at LSO concerts. Dr. Jacques Voois, of West Chester University, took over the podium in 1980. He undertook the most ambitious venture to date in the orchestra's history: performing live at a midnight concert broadcast around the world from within the United Nations in New York, in celebration of Earth Day. This performance was the first by a symphony orchestra within the United Nations.

Irving Ludwig, a Philadelphia Orchestra violinist for many years, was appointed Music Director in 1991, raising the orchestra's capabilities until his passing in 2012. Maestro Ludwig's tenure was marked by an uncompromising pursuit of excellence, as well as the involvement of colleagues from the Philadelphia Orchestra, including current LSO concertmaster Herold Klein, and two talented sons, Mark Ludwig (violist with the Boston Symphony), and the violin soloist, recording artist, concertmaster and conductor Michael Ludwig.

One of the most distinguished community orchestras in the world, the LSO performs a regular season of five concerts at the Upper Darby Performing Arts Center, and other various projects. Led by its sixth Music Director, Reuben Blundell, the orchestra continues its traditions of musical excellence, service to the community, and promotion of area talent.

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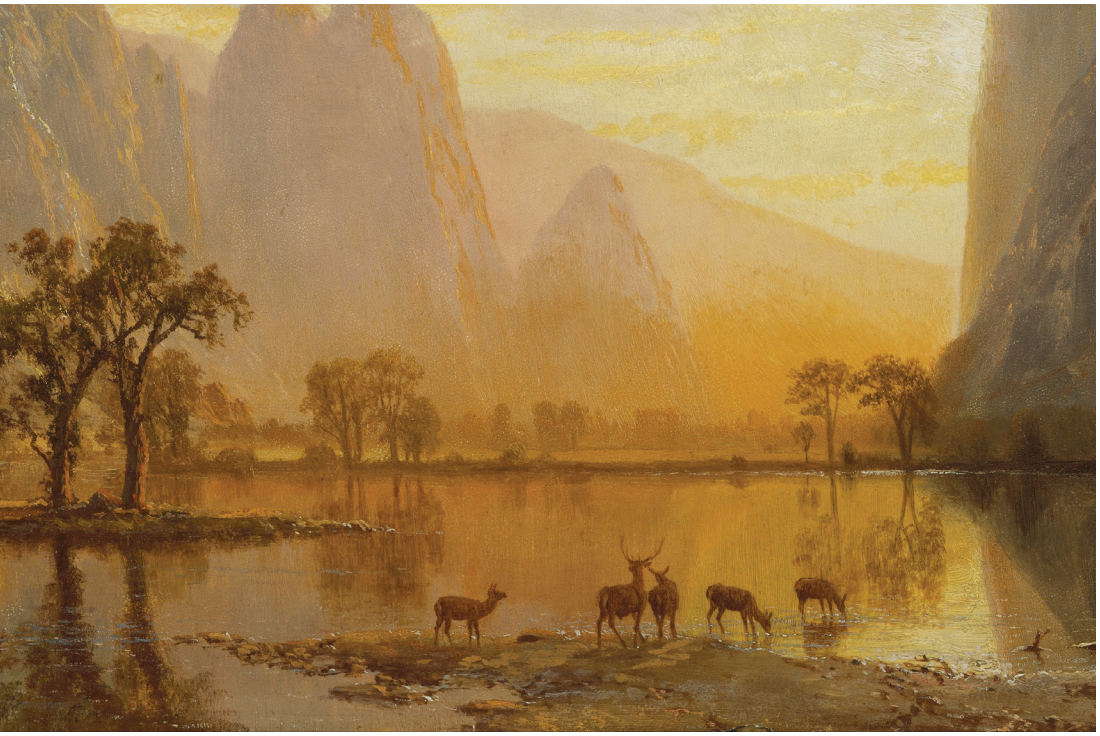
GENA BRANSCOMBE, *A Memory*

In honor of Giannis Stratigis

CARL BUSCH, *Minnehaha's Vision*



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NOVEMBER 5, 2016 (BRANSCOMBE)
NOVEMBER 29, 2016 (BURLEIGH & BONVIN)
FEBRUARY 11, 2017 (MACDOWELL & CADMAN 1-3)
APRIL 29, 2017 (BUSCH)
SEPTEMBER 19, 2017 (CADMAN 4-5)
OCTOBER 10, 2017 (SMITH)

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12. *Festzug (Festival Procession)*

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